

# EXPERIMENTATION & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

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Indian rural society presents a picture of underdevelopment, mass poverty, and socio-economic inequality. The poverty and inequality in Indian society has been an important area of study by social scientists in the post-independence period. Continuing rural under-development and poverty raises some important questions about the utility of policies and strategies of rural development followed so far in India. Naturally, the question has arisen as to why rural development programmes have failed to eradicate rural poverty and underdevelopment even though considerable efforts and resources have been devoted to this end. To answer this fundamental question we need to review critically the history of rural development in India from the pre-independence period to the formulation of strategies and programmes in the post-independence period.

This paper deals with the strategies, programmes and organizational structure used in different phases of rural reconstruction and development in India from the pre-independence period to the initiation of the Community Development Programme.<sup>1</sup> This historical analysis has two objectives; first it indicates the basic features of the strategies, programmes, organizational structures used, and activities undertaken under various rural development programmes, and second, it brings out the influence of some of the pre-independence rural development experiments on the evolution of subsequent rural development programmes

especially the CDP. The first half covers some of the experiments with rural development and reconstruction which began in 1921 and continued upto the introduction of the community development programme. The second half deals with various aspects of the Community Development Programme.

### Pre-Independence experimentation

The Rural development programmes introduced in the post-independence period were not accidental efforts but they had a long history of their own.<sup>2</sup> In the pre-independence period, considerable experimentation on rural development had been done over a span of many decades and by important personalities. The organizational forms and contents of those experiments were not always similar to each other and were conducted in an isolated manner without any close links or correspondence with others and were limited to specific regions<sup>3</sup>. The period of experimentation examined in this section starts from 1921, the year when poet Rabindra Nath Tagore started his rural reconstruction work at Sriniketan. It covers the period upto 1952 when the official programme of Community Development was introduced.

The major experiments of this period can be broadly divided into three categories: those which directly influenced the Community Development Programme; those which were based on the Gandhian concept of constructive work; and other experiments for rural reconstruction. The Nilokheri and the Etawah belong to the first category, the Wardha and Sabarmati to the second, while Sriniketan, Martandam, Baroda, Gurgaon, Firka and Faridabad had belong to the third category.

The Nilokheri experiment of rural development started in 1948 by S.K. Dey attracted wide attention and influenced to a great extent the post-independence rural development schemes in India.<sup>4</sup> The experiment was started with the displaced persons who came from West Pakistan after partition. The programme of agro-industrial township as the central theme of rural development activities was introduced in this experiment. The basic assumption was that the township can have no meaning even for displaced persons nor can it have a secure future unless it can stand on its own. The community or township must ultimately become independent, generate enough income for its members and be able to pay back its obligations. In order to achieve these objectives it was felt that the community must organize its activities on the principle of political, economic and social democracy.

The guiding principle behind the planning for agro-industrial township was that the pattern of development in India, whether in the rural or urban areas, should be built upon its culture and traditions. This concept of agro-industrial township according to S.K. Dey, is closely related to the Indian situation and is not borrowed from outside. S.K. Dey was not in favour of introducing any plan or programme borrowed from foreign, especially Western, sources. On the contrary, he believed that it should take into account the situation of the particular area. The community sentiment of Indian rural society should be encouraged to develop so as to make village a self-sufficient community through the efforts of the community, by the community,

for the community and with the community. This notion of community development is very close to the American notion of democracy advocated by Lincoln. The community advocated by Dey, it should be noted, is a free association of free individuals. In this experiment the development of community's capacity to perform all the activities through free participation of all the individuals was assured by various institutions connected with the experiment.

The development of the agro-industrial township was based on the idea that regardless of what developments take place the bulk of the population of India would continue to live in the villages for a long time to come. So, villages have to be the centre of attention for planning rural development activities. The villages should be developed in a manner that the one-way flow of migration from villages to towns is stopped. Decentralization of administration and the economy should be done in a way whereby villages can provide the amenities of life and develop institutions for a better living. In this way a new community will be developed with a rural-cum-urban character which can be identified as an agro-industrial township. This notion of rural-cum-urban community along with its economic structure was to be the future pattern of Indian economy according to S.K. Dey. The Nilokheri experiment was thus believed to be the immediate answer to the problem of rural under development in India.

Various institutions were formed within the township and they functioned in an integrated manner for the total develop-

ment of the community. The Vocational Training Centre, Mazdoor Manzil and Panchayat were some of the important institutions. The vocational training centre was in-charge of training the people for upgrading their skills. But as time passed, the volume of work increased from production of looms to the scheme for training of drivers and motor mechanics within the project. This institution was open to all as it was formed on the basis of right to equality. Prime Minister Nehru, during his visit to Nilokheri in the first week of April 1948, was highly impressed by the activities of the vocational training centre.

The Mazdoor Manzil, the road to new India, was designed as the project organization for the entire community. It was intended to act as the immediate answer to the need for rehabilitation of the displaced persons in India. It was then believed that if production is to be useful and purposive, muscles must sing while at work. Food, clothing, shelter and all the other needs of the people are produced by the people with the help of technology and these people were trained in the vocational training centre. The people of Mazdoor Manzil believed that -

- a) Muscles can do it, b) Muscles can be trained to do it,
- c) Conditions can be created to do it.

These principle was based upon a triple charter of rights: Right to live; Right to work for a living; and Right to receive what is earned.

A co-operative society was established for marketing of the community product and a Panchayat for village administration and general welfare of the community. Co-operatives were also established for cottage industries such as spinning, weaving,



tailoring, shoe making etc. The distinction between workers and leaders/supervisors within the handicraft and cottage industries was virtually abolished as they received more or less the same wage. A consumer society in the form of consumer club was formed with all the people as its members. In the first stage it was decided that no private trader will be allowed to work within the township and the Consumer club as the central organization will take care of all trade; but later a few people were allowed to trade in a few selected items. Thus the responsibility of production, management and supply was entrusted to democratic co-operative institutions.

The Panchayat was engaged in enforcing the law and maintaining order within the township. It was formed to act as the forum for grievances and complaints and also for supervising activities like sanitation, welfare programmes including assistance to the weaker sections of the community, and looking after recreation and other programmes.

Prime Minister Nehru in a speech at Nilokheri during his visit in 1948 was highly appreciating of its work. He said: "I have seen one Nilokheri from its birth to its present development. I am deeply struck by the efforts made by the people to rebuild themselves and their future. I want 9999 more Nilokheris to implement the message of Nilokheri which says work is the supreme sacrament and the right community organization is the means for enduring values and survival".<sup>6</sup> Responding to the suggestion made by Nehru in Parliament, 40 Members of Parliament visited Nilokheri on March 20, 1950. According to their report

"as a facet in intense experimentation in the economic reorganization in India, Nilokheri breaks fresh grounds in striving for self-sufficiency in all but iron, steel, petroleum and cement. Another aspect of this co-operative enterprise is the provision that those who do not work shall neither live in the colony, nor have proprietary interest in its assets".<sup>7</sup> N.K. Gadgil, then Minister for Works Mines and Power, paid a visit to Nilokheri on 2nd June 1950. Referring to the co-operative experiment being carried out in the township he remarked "I saw today what I have not seen elsewhere. There is no construction work done here which is not related to some definite social function and economic activity. Here is an attempt to build up something on the pattern of which the future Indian society and Indian Community may be modelled".<sup>8</sup>

The special feature of this experiment was the recognition that programmes for development of rural areas must be informed by a clear understanding of rural society and its needs. The organizational forms used in the experiment were also the result of such an understanding. The method used was based on the idea that people should organize themselves on the basis of equality. The life of other community and the production process should be carried out by these organisations for which they should be provided infrastructure facilities. In this way, it was hoped, a new type of community will emerge which will be free of tensions and contradictions. S.K. Dey, the initiator of the programme, identified the new community as an Agro-Industrial Community which is characterised by a mixture of rural and urban features.

The Etawah Pilot Project for rural development, generally considered as the fore-runner of the official community development programme introduced in 1952, was initiated under the leadership of Albert Mayer in 1948.<sup>9</sup> The Pilot Project, operated in collaboration with the U.P. Government in Maheva area of Etawah district, aimed at improving the production of goods and services on the basis of self-reliance and co-operation of the people. The basic objective was to formulate a practical programme for functional planning and physical rebuilding of rural community in order to improve the quality of life without affecting the existing social structure. It was also stated that the experiment would identify measures for development of rural areas by increasing production through self-reliance and co-operation of the people. The introduction of new technology for increasing production was given special importance for the total development of rural society.

The approach to rural development was intended to meet the goal of the experiment through project activities in rural society. The Pilot Project was designed as an instrument of bringing about change in the socio-economic sphere without disturbing the old foundations of rural society. This approach to rural development is closely related to the American view towards Indian rural society and also to the Congress Party ideology and beliefs of the national leadership. Thus the entire project activity was based upon the principle of technological development through formal relationships and formal administration. For the proper functioning of the project, Mayer prescribed three steps :



1. Programmes which are directly related to better production and income generation in agriculture, irrigation, marketing, pisciculture, local industry and animal husbandry, should be introduced in suitable places. Introduction of any programme should be based on its suitability to, and the demands of, the particular locality.
2. The programme should gain the acceptance of the villagers and at the formulation stage everyone should evaluate the benefits of previous attempts in this direction. If the programme is related to local needs then it will be acceptable to the people. There was no mention, however, of how peoples needs or acceptance is to be determined in the absence of any organized people's participation.
3. In the selected villages, some general programmes for the improvement of village life should be introduced especially where people demanded them. The general programmes included public health, sanitation, housing, community facilities etc. These programmes should be introduced to provoke curiosity and demand from adjacent to villages. They will also create the demand for rural development in general among the villagers.

The essence of the method used in this experiment was the involvement of the representatives of villages and groups within villages or at higher levels.<sup>10</sup> It was mentioned that village representatives or village organizers will bridge the gap between the government and rural people and the latter will be organized and mobilized through the village level workers. The Kamdar and

others were incharge of this responsibility and they were expected to live within village or very close to it. These village level workers were also incharge of supervising the work of public health and hygiene. Subject matter officials were appointed below the tehsil level to sustain the efforts of the village level workers. The selection of these personnel was done very carefully and special importance was given to formal qualifications. In the post-independence period, the provision of VLW was recognized by the central government in the community development programme. However, as Albert Mayer also realised, in practice the VLWs and organizers failed to contact the poor people and they were only interested in maintaining contacts with the upper and upper middle classes who constituted about 20 per cent of the village population.

The Etawah experiment introduced a new pattern of administrative organization at the district and project levels. The district administration was headed by a district development officer later known as the district planning officer and he was responsible to the central planning officer located at Lucknow. The tehsil level organization consisted of a development officer, a planner and a executive with emphasizis on execution of plans and programmes. The administrative unit below the tehsil level was the most important organization. It later came to be known as the development block with a development officer at its head. The entire structure of these organizations was based on formal relationships and structure.

Compared to other experiments of pre-independence period the Etawah model introduced some new elements in rural development projects :

- a) The introduction of multipurpose village level workers.
- b) Introduction of new administrative unit below the level, which later come to be known as the development block, to sustain the efforts of rural development.
- c) The idea of co-ordinating the planning activities among different departments like agriculture, co-operative, education and other related fields.
- d) The selection of trained staff with special care with importance being given to formal education. The relationship between those personnel was based on the American notion of democratic relationship within the organization which is explained as Inner Democratization.
- e) Strengthening the activities at different levels while giving importance to working at a slow speed.
- f) A limited use of applied social sciences and some theories of extension.

It is interesting to note that Albert Mayer, the initiator of the Pilot Project was not an expert in rural development or agriculture but an architect and urban planner. However as Nehru in a letter dated 17.6.49 to Albert Mayer, pointed out. "I feel that not only your technical knowledge and experience, but even more so your psychological approaches to these problems will be of great help". The psychological approaches to rural development were closely related to Nehru's idea of rural

development, that is the idea of community life on a higher scale without breaking up the old foundation. Thus this views of rural development may be characterised conservative in character as it did not envisage any major change in the basic structure of rural society.

Both Nehru and Mayer gave special attention to the principle of technological development and introduction of modern techniques for India's rural development. According to Albert Mayer, India's rural population needs to raise its standard of living and level of expectation by using the <sup>government</sup> and economic system. So, Mayer's programme as implemented in Etawah, was based upon the American approach to rural development in under developed countries like India.<sup>11</sup>

The Gandhian theory of rural development was put into practice in the rural development experiments at Wardha and Sabarmati. The programmes and methods of these two experiments were closely related to the post-independence programmes of rural development. The Gandhian concept of economic development is based on Gandhi's idea of village swaraj involving the creation of self-sufficient village communities independent in all major respects, though interrelated at a general level.<sup>12</sup> The major concern of such villages is to produce their food and other necessary articles for their own consumption. Education is to be compulsory up to the final basic course and the village activities are to be conducted in a co-operative way. According to the Gandhian way this village swaraj can be achieved through two means : truth and non-violence. The successful functioning

of this village swaraj will lead to the establishment of Ram Rajya. This concept of rural development is closely linked to the gandhian vision of development especially the production and distribution of goods and services.

Economic development which results in the progress of society has two facets; material progress and moral progress. Material progress consists of production of goods and services which are identified as essential commodities for the satisfaction of material needs of the members of the society. According to this concept, therefore, production will be limited to essential commodities and will strengthen the moral or real progress of the society. The moral or real progress of society is concerned with the distribution of goods and services among the people. In this way distribution becomes an important factor for the real progress of the society in the Gandhian theory of economic development. To strengthen the activities of rural development and for real progress production will be then a mixture of material and moral progress. Regarding the process of distribution, Gandhi emphasized that distribution may be equal if the production is done on the basis of equality. He also talked about swadeshi, where production is based on indigenous control to meet the needs of the common people. Gandhi, thus, has laid special emphasis on indigenous technology with special reference to small and cottage industries.

According to Gandhi, the development of village and cottage industries is essential to create more employment and make the villages self-reliant or self-sufficient. The small scale



cottage industries should employ indigenous technology and there should be market for the finished products. Thus the pattern of production will be dictated by the demands of the local market and needs of the people. This concept emphasised two things : first production should be employment oriented and second, it should meet the needs of the society. Khadi was identified as the most important village industry and Gandhi called Khadi "the sun of village solar system".

It should be noted that the Gandhian concept of economic development through decentralization of economic activities in the form of small and village industries does not in any way oppose the use of science and technology which could develop the village and cottage industries. Actually he wanted to utilize the infrastructure facilities easily available in our society.

Regarding organization of rural development, he emphasized the role of panchayats based on the principle of decentralization of power. The panchayats should be governed by the laws made by themselves. The structure of the panchayat organization was divided into three units and village panchayats were the primary political units consisting of elected members for a specified period. He divided the village panchayat into three sub-units, for example gram sabha, vikas panchayat and nyaya panchayat and all these units were to be responsible for specific activities. The Gram sabhas were incharge of legislation, vikas panchayats were to look after the general development and nyaya panchayat for administration of justice. Below the tehsil level there were to be panchayat samities or Anchalik samities and above them

Zilla parishads or district panchayats to supervise all the activities at tehsil and district level respectively.

The major short coming of the Gandhian approach to rural development, as implemented in Wardha and Sabarmati, was that it failed to strengthen the agrarian economy and provide social justice. In this sense Gandhi failed to understand the complex nature of social structure. He always gave special attention to the individual's developments and more specifically to moral or psychological change in people's life. He suggests that people must developed first; the community will change accordingly. But the complex nature of man and his development is directly related to the change and development of society and its existing structure. Thus Gandhi failed to take note of structural inequality in rural society and its role in social change.<sup>13</sup>

Apart from the Project discussed above there were a few other experiments in rural development initiated in the Pre-independence Period which merit some attention. Among these were the Sriniketan, Martandam, Gurgaon, Baroda, Faridabad and Firka. A noteworthy feature of all these experiments is the influence of the ideas of their initiators in respect of both the general orientation to rural development as well as the specific programmes and schemes taken up. Thus we find that the Sriniketan experiment was influenced by the ideas of Tagore,<sup>14</sup> the Martandam experiment by those of Spencer Hatch,<sup>15</sup> Gurgaon experiment of F.L. Braynes.<sup>16</sup> The Baroda project of V.T. Krishnachari's views,<sup>17</sup> while the Faridabad project reflected the

thinking of Sudhir Ghosh.<sup>18</sup> The only exception was the Firka scheme by Madras which was not the brain-child of any particular individual but was initiated by the then Provincial Government of Madras.<sup>19</sup> All of these rural development projects, moreover, had as a shared objective the need to improve the lot of the village dwellers by bringing about all-round development. There, however, the similarity ended because all the projects tended to view the rural problem from different perspectives which inevitably influenced the nature of specific programmes undertaken by them.

For instance, Tagore emphasised the role of art, music and literature in uplifting the rural community. To him the need to strengthen the moral fabric and artistic sensibility in the village society was as important as the need to bring about material well-being.<sup>20</sup> Similarly, in the Martandam experiment the high priority was given to moral and spiritual development of the people because the initiator, Spencer Hatch, was a Christian missionary. On the other hand, F.L. Bryne and V.T. Krishnanachari, being administrators, tended to lay special emphasis on the need for specific programmes and schemes and the proper way of administering them than on moral, aesthetic or spiritual ideas.

#### Post-Independence Programmes of Rural Development

Between the Rural Development experimentation of the pre-independence period and the formal initiation of the official programme of Community Development in India in October 1952 considerable discussion and debate ensued among some of the



pioneers of these experiments, Prime Minister Nehru and the American institutions and interests. It is true that the Community Development Programme incorporated different elements from different experiments conducted during the pre-independence period, yet the fact remains that the Etawah model was the one which exerted decisive influence. Several considerations appear to have contributed to this choice.

During the freedom struggle rural development and reconstruction was a major theme on which a continuing dialogue had been going on within the Congress Party. The Congress leadership also made public pronouncements and commitments regarding the objectives and thrust of the rural development programme once independence was achieved. This commitment, as several historical accounts reveal, was to be translated in such a fashion so as not to violently upset the existing structure of socio-economic relations in the Indian society.<sup>21</sup> A mixture of radicalism in principle and conservatism in practice developed within the Congress party from the pre-independence period. This limiting factor narrowed the choice of the content of the rural development programme, its organization and legislative thrust which came to be adopted by the government of India later on.

The personal ideas and values of important Indian leaders like Gandhi, Nehru, V.T.K. and S.K. Dey, were the second major influencing factor. Gandhi was, for instance, in favour of self-sufficient village economy and self-reliant village community, and maximum utilization of manpower through indigenous technology

and resources. Prime Minister Nehru was personally interested in introducing a somewhat more radical programme based on democracy, socialism and modern technology to solve the urgent problems of rural development. He wanted to use the community development programme as a means to remove poverty from the Indian villages. V.T. Krishnamachari, on the other hand, structured the need to help the people to find their own solutions to specific problems of rural society while S.K. Dey laid special emphasis on people's participation and utilization of local initiative for the economic development of whole community.

At that point of time, <sup>7377</sup> organizational alternatives available for rural development were many and the government of India, under Nehru were aware of their existence. Some deliberations at the official level in the form of committee reports e.g. (Grow More Food Enquiry Committee and Narielwala Committee) had also been going on. There were also vigorous project management efforts being made by some Indians like S.K. Dey, on the one hand, and Chester Bowles and others representing American interests on the other. These discussions on the method and organization of rural development programme was the deciding factor for the future course of the history of rural development in our country. While Nehru was highly impressed by the Nilokheri experiment and was intending to use S.K. Dey's dynamism and enthusiasm for rural development subsequently, it is significant that Dey's Nilokheri organizational model was given a convenient go by and the American inspired Etawah model accorded

preference in the Community Development Programme. Much against the official view point Chester Bowles reveals that the American motive in offering massive aid for the community development programme in India was among others to prevent the spread of communism in India.<sup>22</sup> The strong point of the Nilokheri model was integration of its skill upgradation, cooperativization of production structure, building the capacity of the community to manage its own affairs and reduction of the scope of exploitation by the middle men through the marketing structure. Acceptance of Nilokheri model would have triggered a major structural change in Indian society. In this experiment the production and marketing system was organised with the active involvement of beneficiaries, so as to reduce possibilities of exploitation.<sup>23</sup> This was neither to the liking of the hard core of the Indian leadership nor of the Americans. The Etawah model provided a convenient organizational choice which offered certain palliatives without major structural changes.

Community Development Programme : Strategy and Organizational Structure over time.

The official Community Development programme was introduced in October 1952. Its main objective was the total development of the rural people, to increase production through application of scientific technology as well as better utilization of human resources and extension of the principle of cooperation. In the strategy used community development was regarded as the method and the National Extension Service as the agency for socio-economic transformation of rural society.<sup>24</sup> The programme was

intended to secure the peoples' right to live in rural areas, to earn a living and the right to receive what they earned. It was not only aimed to improve the material well being of the society but also to build up the community as a whole through its own efforts.

The objective strategy of community development programme has continued to shift periodically ever since its introduction in 1952. At the time of its introduction it was expected to be a generalized programme of rural development embracing within its ambit different aspects of rural life. However, as the Second Five Year Plan began the emphasizes shifted to industrialisation in which diversified agricultural production was to play a helping role. Community Development Programme was, therefore, used to increase agricultural production. Land Reforms, and strengthening of the rural institutional infrastructure (through cooperatives and Panchayat Raj) followed. Consequently the machinery of the community development programme was organically linked with the newer set of institutions with the avowed aim of "facilitating people's participation".

The Third Five Year Plan emphasized increased agriculture production and development of human resources. The community development programme was expected to play its part on all these fronts. Between 1962 and 1971 the country had to fight three wars (one with China and two with Pakistan) and community development machinery was activized to provide civilian support to the defence efforts. The approach to rural development from Fourth Five Year Plan onwards has been specific function, area



and target group oriented. The community development objectives have consequently been modified to that extent. Historically, the aims and objectives of the different Five Year Plans on the one hand and periodic requirements on the other have tended to significantly affect the functioning of the community and rural development programmes in India. The absence of mutuality between the two sets have quite often created operational problems. The short term and long terms goals appear to have been pursued with the assumption that there was no contradiction between the two and the same organizational set up of community development programme could handle additional functions without seriously affecting its operational efficacy. Whereas some of the historical demands on the community development programme were understandable in terms of economic and military compulsions, the political parameters of such a system of administrative arrangements have not been adequately taken note of. To that extent structuring the organizational design and motive of rural development have been a casualty.

### Organizational Structure

The organizational structure of community development programme has evolved over a period of time. The journey from community projects to community development to national extension service to linkage with the co-operatives, panchyati Raj institutions to coexistence with a larger number of other rural development institutions established at various levels after the mid-sixties has been an eventful one. In this journey although there have been minimal changes in the structure of the community

development block itself, while its overall structural relationships, both horizontal as well as vertical, with other institutions have changed considerably.

As indicated earlier, the organizational structure of the community project and community development programme was largely borrowed from the Etawah experiment. This was the first large scale experimentation of project organization structure in India. The original organizational structure of community project was first administered through the community project administration located in the Planning Commission and later on converted into an independent Ministry of Community Development. The organizational structure had four major units : the central, state, District and project administration.<sup>25</sup> At the bottom level, the village units were served by village level workers and trained dais. These village level workers served as agents of change to communicate between village and block level organization and supervise the activities at the village level. Below the Tehsil level, a new spatial administrative structure, the Development Block, was introduced where the Block Development Officer was in-charge of all the activities and he was assisted by Extension Officers in different areas. The Extension Officers were to work as supervisors for the VLWs on the one hand and assist the Block Development Officer on the other. Thus Extension Officers were subject to dual control : administratively they were controlled by BDO's. Their technical control was vested with their departmental officer at the district level.

At the District level, the administration was headed by District Development Planning Officers. The State level organization was headed by development commissioner to coordinate the activities at state level and a state advisory committee was formed to the activities. These advisory committees were to consist of official and non-official members.

The Community Development Programme led to emergence of an administrative structure below the Tehsil level for the first time in India. The primary objective of the structure was to facilitate penetration of change forces into the social structure of the village society. However, apart from the Peripheral organization such as Mahila Mandal and Jubaka Mandal dals, no attempt was made to organize the village society on any class/segmental basis. Predictable village leadership was used at the local level as major instruments facilitating not only the entry of the development programme but also as "outside change agents" After some-time it came to be realised that the people themselves were not sufficiently involved in the community development programme. This realization found its expression in the recommendation of the Balwant Rai Mehta Committees' report and paved the way for the introduction of panchayati raj structure. The panchayati raj mechanism actually largely legitimized the hold of the traditional landed and other vested interest on the development apparatus. The Panchayat Raj structure itself with minor exceptions in Gujrat, Maharashtra and Andhra Pradesh, has not really resulted in decentralization of political power. In fact in most of the states elections to these institutions have been kept in abeyance for as long as ten or twelve years.

Block System : Static Structure and Changing Relationship

The basic structure of the Block which was introduced in 1952 has, remained relatively unchanged. Since the mid-sixties, some of the positions of extension officers (specially females) were withdrawn as the funds dried up for this programme when the community development become the exclusive responsibility of the States. During this lean period the block organization has largely no programmatic funds available and when the function, area and Target group based programmes (IADP, DPAP, HAD, TAD etc.) were introduced in late sixties, the block personnel were redeployed to implement those programmes. One of the crowning ironies of development organization designing in India has been mushrooming of a large number of project administration working in the same geographical area. The customary device used in such situations has been addition of one more coordination committee with the organization themselves and their employees quite often functioning without any proper task and role integration. This has been the fate of the block structure as well in India. To reemphasize, the block was a special administrative unit brought in the early phase of the rural development. Subsequently several other development organizations (co-operatives, Land Development Bank, and others) came on the scene as independent project administration operating generally from the district level. The Block organization has been required to function with those organizations after 1968. Quite often the functionaries of the block are supposed to help these organizations in their programme execution. The beginning of lean period,



1968, the block organizations has been repeatedly entrusted with routine regulatory functions such as issuing permits of supplies, looking after the relief work in droughts, floods and other calamities and so on.

It is obvious from the foregoing analysis that the task being handled by the block personnel has been increasing as the time has passed but the major portion of the task consist of actions and activities concerning the work of other development organizations. This work is largely of regulatory type and involves quite often leased work with the officials of different organizations on behalf of the beneficiaries. The block personnel were expected in the heydays (1952-1967) of community development programme to go to villages and contact the people. They did so untill mid sixties. The direction of these exchanges has now generally been reversed. Even the village level workers do not live in the villages and it is the rural population who come to meet block officials instead of the latter doing so.

When the Community Development Programme started the block functionaries were working with zeal and enthusiasm. Since the block agencies were new they were expected to be free from the institutionalised inequalities of Indian rural social structure. However, as time passed and the relative isolation of the block system from the institutional inequalities in the Indian society crumbled. As a result the operation of the block system also began to reflect the structural inequalities of the larger society. This is where the block organization stands today.<sup>26</sup>

## Conclusion :

The socio-economic and political development of the country before independence was sought to be accomplished through reconstruction work at various places by non-government agencies. All these experiments were designed to present an alternative model of development that could be applicable to the entire country without any radical change in the social structure. For this reason radical agrarian reforms were not attempted by the different programmes of rural reconstruction. The agrarian society which was controlled by the landed class was not challenged through the activities of various reconstruction works. In the case of Nilokheri, however, some kind of radical programmes in the form of co-operativization of the production and distribution systems was introduced and organization of beneficiaries developed. As an experiment it was only limited to a specific geographical area and was based on non-political motives. The success or the failure of these experiments depended upon the initiators of the projects as they were the crucial figures for directing and controlling the activities.

An analysis of the introduction of the Community Development Programme and evolution of the programmes in various Five Year Plans prove that it was closely related to the political beliefs and attitudes of the rulers and policy makers. The source of inspiration of the Community Development Programme was a mixture of various methods adopted by people like Gandhi, Nehru, V.T. Krishnamachari, S.K. Dey, Paul Hoffman and Douglas Ensminger of the Ford Foundation, Chester Bowles and Clifford Wilson of Indo-American Technical Co-operation. Because of this mixed

genealogy the Community Development Programme failed to present a clear method of activity for rural development. The methods were not clearly known even to the officials who were incharge of programme implementation. The Community Development Programme as a comprehensive programme for the all round development of the society was introduced to create a general consciousness among the rural population and inspire them for participating in the development activities. For the successful implementation of this programme, democratic institutions at the local level like panchayats and co-operative societies were created. It was then believed that these institutions will gradually generate local leadership among the rural poor and other disadvantaged groups to supervise the activities in an organized and peaceful manner to strengthen the process of social change. The Congress Party leadership believed that political parties should have nothing to do in organizing the rural poor and strengthening the activities of the community development programme. So, in the absence of political party involvement the whole responsibility of community development was given over to officials of government departments, especially the block personnel.

The community development programme was mainly influenced by two important Pilot Projects for rural development which had been undertaken earlier. Those two projects, Etawah and Nilokheri, were taken under the guidance of project officials and administrators in a very limited geographical area. In the initial stages some efficient and dedicated administrators and officials were connected with the programme and selection of

personnel for the programme was done carefully, but as the programme was extended over a wider area it became difficult to maintain control over the selection of the personnel consequently Community Development as an approach to rural development in a larger area failed to meet the goals of the programme.

The measures adopted for rural development through the Community Development Programme were introduced in a peaceful manner. They were, moreover, imposed from above. For the introduction of this programme no pressure of any kind was exerted by any organization of the rural poor or by any organization of cultivators, agricultural labourers, share-croppers etc. The Government of India faced no agitation or movement to introduce specific schemes under the programme. In this background it is relevant to ask why the programme was introduced. It appears that the real intention of the Community Development Programme was to prevent the emergence any mass movement which could lead to revolutionary changes in the socio-economic structure of the country. In this connection one could refer to the Telengana People's struggle in Andhra Pradesh and Tebhanga Movement in Bengal during 1946-47. The ruling class, obviously, wanted to do everything it could to insulate the country from the spread of such movements.

The term 'Community' used in the Community Development Programme is purely a western notion which is closely related to the Western, especially Americans social system. The community which exists in America and other Western countries is well organized and not much stratified. This notion of community has



little relevance to the Indian social structure which is highly stratified. Indian society, specially rural society, is riven by castes, sub-caste, religion, nationality, sects, etc. Thus it does not exist as a homogeneous system with common features and without any conflicts or tensions as the notion of the <sup>community</sup> pre-supposes. It is therefore clear that the initiators of the community development programme failed to analyse the Indian social structure and used instead a Western model which is hardly relevant to the Indian situation. This could be one of the reasons for the failure of the Community Development Programme.

## Notes and References

1. This is not a census of all the reconstruction activities in pre-independence period. But it is limited and focussed on the important ones among them.
2. See R.N. Haldipur; 1974, Sociology of Community Development and Panchayati Raj, in a Survey of Research in Sociology and Social Anthropology, Volume-II, Popular Prakashan, Bombay, P-30; A.R. Desai; 1979, Rural India in Transition, second edition, Popular Prakashan, Bombay, P-128 and S.N. Mishra; 1981, Rural Development and Panchayati Raj, Concept Publishing Company, New Delhi, P-19.
3. H.S. Verma; 1975, A critical Appraisal of Community Development Programme in India, Centre for Management in Agriculture, Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad, P-1.
4. For detail description of Nilokheri experiment see, S.K. Dey; 1962, Nilokheri, Asia Publishing House, Bombay.
5. The Prime Minister Nehru visited the Kurukhetra came in the first week of April 1948 and on his way from the office of Dey and told "yeh ho sakta toe kuon nahin hota hai" and in the public meeting before leaving for Delhi, he declared he would like to see a thousand townships in India humming with the music of the muscles as he heard in vocational training cum Production centre in the camp of Kurukshetra, Ibid; pp.17-18.
6. Ibid, p.57.
7. Ibid, p.120.
8. Ibid, pp.120-121.
9. See Albert Mayer, et al; 1958, Pilot Project in India : The Study of Rural Development at Etawah, Uttar Pradesh. University of California, Berkely and J.C. Kavoori and B.N. Singh; 1967, History of Rural India in Modern India, Impex India, New Delhi, pp.95-409.
10. Albert Mayer, et al; 1958, op.cit. p-25.
11. An interesting explanation has given by Alice Thorner, she mentioned that in Mayer's view, what the Indian villages required was Purely Programmatic that is, it involved no ideological bias and required no sophisticated justification. See Alice Thorner, 1981, Nehru, Albert Mayer, and origin of community project, Economic and Political Weekly, Vol-16, No-4, p.119.
12. For village Swaraj, see M.K. Gandhi; 1942, Harijan, 26 July.

13. For the short coming of Gandhian approach to rural development, see, Namboodripad, E.M.S., 1959, The Mahatma and the Ism, People's Publishing House, New Delhi and Hiren Mukherjee; 1979 (3rd edition), Gandhiji : A Study, Peoples Publishing House, New Delhi.
14. Sugata Dasgupta, 1962, A Poet and a Plan, Thacker Spink, Bombay, and Hiranmay Banerjee, 1966, Experiment in Rural Reconstruction, Viswa Bharati, Calcutta. pp. 61-79.
15. D.S. Hatch, 1949, Rural Centre Approach : Educational Approach to Rural Development, London. and Towards Freedom From Want : From India to Mexico, 1949, Oxford University Press, London.
16. F.L. Bryne; 1946, Better village, Oxford University Press, London and Village ABC; 1950, Oxford University Press, London.
17. V.T. Krishnamachari; 1962, Community Development in India, Manager of Publication, Delhi and Sugata Dasgupta; 1977, in the Introduction of History of Rural Development in Modern India, Vol-II, Impex India, New Delhi. J.C. Kavoori and B.N. Singh; 1967, Op.cit.
18. Jain, S.C., 1967, Community Development and Panchayati Raj in India, Allied Publishing, Bombay.
19. S.N. Mishra; 1981, op.cit pp.28-29 and Rajeshwar, Dayal; 1960, Community Development Programme in India, Kitab Mahal, Allahabad.
20. Tagore was, however, essentially a poet and an artist. He, therefore, necessarily dreamt of a new vision and of a higher standard of life for the people of his country and wished to create conditions where such a life, full of viguour and joy, acsthetic beauty and sublime happiness would fall within the easy reach of his poverty sticken fellow beings. He wanted, as if, to create on his earth, once more the world of ragas of Tansen, of the poem of Kalidas and above all a happy, vigorous, and well educated people who could participate in an evergrowing standard of life by their own efforts and strength" Sugata Dasgupta, 1962, op.cit, p.2.
21. Fankel, F.R., 1978; India's Political Economy 1947-77 : A Gradual Revolution, Oxford University Press, Delhi, has mentioned that, "it was.....experimental frame work that enabled a creative approach to be taken towards solving problems of production and distribution, an approach that sought to combine goals of growth and reduction of disparities, while avoiding the violence and regimentation of revolutionary", p.3. and Gunnar Mydral, 1968, Asian Drama : An enquiry into poverty of Nations, Vol-II, Kalyani Publishers, New Delhi, p-1345.

22. H.S. Verma, 1980; Post-Independence change in Rural India, Inter-India Publication, p-24, has explained that "much against the run of the mill objectives of the Community Development Programme in India listed by many scholars (Dayal : 1960; Dey : 1962, 1969; Ensminger: 1972; Jain : 1967; Kavoori and Singh : 1967; Krishnamachari: 1962), the dominant object in introducing it was to contain spread of communism. Chester Bowles (1954), who brought along the massive U.S. assistance for this programme, admits it much without fuss". And also Jitendra Sahai, 1982, Dollar in India, National Publishing House, New Delhil p.11.
23. H.S. Verma; 1980, op.cit p.24.
24. India, Planning Commission; 1952, The First Five Year Plan, p-223.
25. For the detail description of the organisation structure see, Ibid, p-228.
26. H.S. Verma; 1981, organization alternative for Rural Development in India : Critical issues in their appropriate choice, Paper presented at G.B. Pant Social Science Institute, Allahabad.



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